

LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

J. WILLIAM FULBRIGHT FOREIGN SCHOLARSHIP BOARD

The Fulbright Program strengthens our nation's capacity in virtually every area of human endeavor. It also contributes to the well-being of other nations that engage with us in the unique binational experiment that Senator Fulbright began nearly sixty years ago. The Fulbright Program has enhanced the quality of life for Americans and for people around the world and it has done so one exchange at a time. Its more than a quarter of a million alumni are found in institutions and professions across this great nation and in every profession and field of endeavor in countries around the globe. Through the exchange experiences and ongoing collaborations and friendships that Fulbrighters make, the family of participating nations has benefited in the areas of education, trade and business, science and health. In turn, this enhanced well-being of mankind contributes in important ways to the improvement of international relations and peace.

The Fulbright Program is quite simply one of the most important investments our nation can make to build bridges between people. It fosters the exchange of ideas and learning that enhances growth and development, democracy, and mutual understanding around the globe. The fact that the Fulbright Program is binational and attracts substantial investment of resources and support from nearly 100 participating countries is testament to the Program's vitality and spirit of innovation which attracts such partners and binds us together in areas of mutual endeavor beneficial to our societies.

This annual report conveys the rich texture of the Fulbright Program and, through a selection of stories and vignettes, showcases the context within

which dialogue and learning takes place: by engaging key individuals and institutions, by educating young people during a formative time in their lives, by being inclusive and reaching out to diverse elements of societies, and by encouraging involvement with the host community. It demonstrates how the Fulbright Program changes misperceptions and lays the foundation for improved knowledge and better understanding. I have seen this during my membership on the Fulbright Board and each year that I am associated with the Program, my admiration for its participants only continues to grow. When I came to the Board, I knew of the Fulbright Program's reputation as one of the world's most respected exchange programs. What I have experienced on the Board, is just how many talented and motivated people from around the world have played a part in making the Fulbright Program a flagship exchange activity.

As Chair of this distinguished Board, I have had the opportunity to travel to China, Korea, Brazil, Spain, Belgium, Russia, Hungary, and the Czech Republic where I met with Fulbright students, scholars, and teachers. I have worked with Fulbright binational commission directors and their staffs around the world, government officials in Washington and at our embassies and consulates abroad, with university administrators, as well as our cooperating agencies. The dynamism of the Fulbright Program is derived from the dynamism of those who participate in the Program, and I want to offer them, for myself—and also on behalf of the entire Board—heartfelt thanks. A specific example of such a person comes to mind.



In the Czech Republic, I met a young Fulbright Student from Minnesota. She was working to recreate the culture and music of Terezin, the fortress that was converted to a ghetto and concentration camp by the Nazis in 1941. In small villages around the Czech Republic, she worked with youngsters, directing them in plays that the children of Terezin performed before the Holocaust. She sometimes traveled for six hours a day to go back and forth to the villages to teach.

Fulbrighters like this one are changing the perceptions that people have about America and in doing so are ambassadors who contribute to public diplomacy. They help create a worldwide context within which productive dialogue between peoples of different cultures can take place. Our Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice, has recognized the value of programs like the Fulbright Program as contributing to “transformational diplomacy.”

This report highlights ways that the Fulbright Program is a force for positive transformation. Sometimes the change may be an increase in new knowledge about the past or cutting-edge research in an area challenging public health. Sometimes the change may be in the way a trade issue is viewed or the way a social prejudice is eliminated. The change may involve just one individual who makes a difference. Other times, there is a ripple effect when a teacher shares his or her new experiences with many students.

A hallmark of the Fulbright Program is the cross-pollination of ideas and approaches to issues that takes place from country to country, from world region to world region. For example, Dr.

Muhammad Yunus, the founder of the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh, was a Fulbright Student at Vanderbilt University, where he earned his Ph.D. in economics. The Grameen Bank’s use of micro-credit lending is changing the way in which the world seeks to eradicate poverty. The fact that Dr. Yunus came to the United States under the Fulbright Program is not the end of the story. In 1988, American Alex Counts went to Bangladesh as a Fulbright Student to study the Grameen Bank’s micro-credit program. He worked closely with Dr. Yunus and then went on to write a book—*Give Us Credit*—which chronicles micro-credit lending. So the Fulbright Program reached a Bangladeshi economist and an American anti-poverty activist (who became the first president of the Grameen Foundation USA) and both have made important contributions as they work to improve the human condition.

This report is testimony to the fact that the Fulbright Program has remained true to the goals and standards that have sustained it for more than a half-century and make it such a force for positive transformation. The Fulbright Board is committed to fostering the legacy of the Fulbright Program, and to enhancing its adaptability to the changes of the new millennium.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Steven Uhlfelder". The signature is fluid and cursive, written over a light-colored background.

STEVEN J. UHLFELDER, *Chair*
J. William Fulbright Foreign Scholarship Board